

is exactly what this amendment achieves. It authorizes a multiyear procurement plan for the Raptor, in which 20 aircraft a year over 3 years will be purchased. This will result in the taxpayer saving approximately \$225 million under the existing plan to purchase 184 aircraft.

Introducing innovative plans to save funds is nothing new to the F-22 program. In fact, since production first began on this aircraft, the "fly-away" cost has been reduced by 35 percent. However, we must take advantage of any opportunity that will result in additional savings while increasing our military capabilities. A multiyear F-22 procurement plan achieves that goal.

If this amendment is adopted, the Air Force will be permitted to enter into a multiyear procurement contract. However, some of our colleagues argue that the F-22 does not meet the six-point requirements for multiyear procurement under existing law. I, on the other hand, believe these criteria have been met and the amendment before us should be seen as reinforcing that fact.

Specifically, the first requirement to authorize a multiyear contract under the existing statute is the determination that substantial savings will result from the contract. The Institute for Defense Analysis estimates that a multiyear contract will result in at least \$225 million in savings.

The second criterion states there must be a "minimum need" for the aircraft. I believe that my address today has shown the urgent need to deploy the Raptor in order to counter the deployment of fourth generation fighters and new antiaccess systems.

As far as a minimum need is concerned, as a result of the Joint Air Dominance Study the Secretary of Defense stated that a minimum requirement for 183 Raptors existed. Under the administration's proposal, which this amendment is based upon, the production rate, procurement rate and the total quantities of the Raptor purchased will be substantially unchanged during the contract period. Remember, the contract calls for the purchase of 20 Raptors a year over the next 3 years.

The third requirement insists that the Raptor be a program with stable funding. The Armed Services Committee has added additional funds for this year and the Department of Defense's future budgets will also contain funding requests since the purchase of F-22s under a multiyear procurement contract was called for in the Quadrennial Defense Review.

Fourth, the aircraft's design must be stable. This is probably the most controversial requirement. Yes, the F-22 has had its problems during the development and production process, but I challenge anyone to identify another strike aircraft that hasn't. Remember, the F-22 is now operational. That means the Raptor will deploy in support of our service members and it has satisfactorily completed the engineering and manufacturing development

phase as well as its follow-on operational test and evaluation.

It is important to note that any upgrades to the Raptor will not result in significant structural changes. Some might argue, correctly, that a potential problem with the forward boom frame heat-treating has been identified on up to 91 aircraft. It is important to note that this was not an aircraft design problem, but an issue of a manufacturer not following the prescribed manufacturing process. In reality, testing has so far shown that 92 percent of the suspect frames tested did in fact undergo an adequate manufacturing process. I have been advised that neither a redesign nor a refit are planned or expected. Regardless, the manufacturer has been replaced and all aircraft procured under a multiyear agreement will not have this problem.

Fifth, a program must show that its cost estimates are realistic. The Air Force has gone above and beyond the call of duty in providing the Congress with independent cost analysis. The Institute for Defense Analysis provided an Independent Cost Estimate in 2005 and with a multiyear procurement business case analysis in May of this year.

Finally, the last requirement of a multiyear procurement plan is the determination that the program is important to the national security of the United States. I believe that we have already established conclusively that the Raptor is the answer to the present and future threats posed by antiaccess systems.

Therefore, I believe that the Raptor qualifies for a multiyear procurement contract under the existing statute. However, to ensure there is no doubt on this subject, I strongly recommend this amendment to my colleagues.

Our Nation stands at a crossroads.

In a wide variety of policy arenas, the Senate is being asked to make investments that will reap rewards for our children and our grandchildren.

The F-22 is one of these investments. It will guarantee America's dominance of the skies for the next half century. All that is required is that we make a commitment now to ensure that future. By purchasing adequate numbers of F-22 Raptors we are meeting the threats of today and tomorrow and we are doing so in such a way as to maximize the savings of the American taxpayer.

I thank Senator CHAMBLISS for offering this important amendment, and I urge my colleagues to join my fellow cosponsors, Senators INHOFE, LIEBERMAN, BINGAMAN, CORNYN, THUNE, BENNETT, ISAKSON, DOMENICI, BAUCUS, DODD, HUTCHISON, COLLINS, BEN NELSON, FEINSTEIN and STEVENS in supporting this amendment.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to speak in support of the amendment to authorize a multiyear procurement for the F-22 fighter—amendment No. 4261 I am proud to cosponsor. I thank my friend and col-

league, the Senator from Georgia, Mr. CHAMBLISS, for his leadership in offering this amendment. I believe he has very ably and comprehensively argued the case for this multiyear and has persuasively rebutted the personal arguments against taking this action. But I want to add some thoughts about why I think this is a prudent act by this body.

The F-22 has had developmental problems and it has had cost increases. But all this is old news. There are few, if any, programs that have had more oversight by the Senate Armed Services Committee than this program. We have examined it in great detail in hearings each year from concept to procurement. We have examined the technology, the acquisition plan, the development process, and the production issue. And we have examined the costs in substantial detail. In some years we have put on cost caps to force spending discipline, and in other years we have slowed down production to align the request with the reality of the backlog. But despite the challenges of building the world's most capable fighter, we have decided, and the full Senate has decided, that this is a critical program that should and must continue. And the U.S. Air Force has argued it needs the F-22 to continue.

There is a very compelling reason for this decision. Air dominance is absolutely essential to American military dominance and American security in the 21st century. Our military has had that dominance since World War II. If we were ever to lose it, or even allow it to be seriously challenged, the global strategic environment would fundamentally change for the United States. The F-22 is the way we prevent that from happening for the next generation maybe more. Much has been said about the cutting-edge technologies that are included in this airplane that will ensure we maintain that air dominance. I need not repeat that now. But it is the reason that we have voted to continue procuring the F-22 and it is reason that we will continue to do so.

I believe the problems with the F-22 that some of my colleagues have reminded us about have been substantially solved. The F-22 business case was validated by DOD during the QDR and the Air Dominance Study. The long debate over the number we will procure is about over. I am convinced that it will not be lower than the 183 validated by the QDR. In fact if there are now to be changes in that number, it will be increased, not decreased. So I believe that we will build the additional 60 contemplated in this amendment. The decision to procure these 60 over 3 years instead of 2 years is sound. We should not have a break in the production line before we begin building the F-35 the JSF. Those 60 aircraft can be built for about \$250 million less with the multiyear buy provided for by this amendment.

The Senate Armed Services Committee, and the Airland Subcommittee,